

# STRATEGY 6: ENSURING COST-EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT USE OF PUBLIC INVESTMENTS

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State, federal, tribal, local and private organizations all have intensified their interest in water rights acquisitions. Funding has been approved by the U.S. Congress, Washington state legislature and federal agencies to acquire water rights through purchases, leases, conservation efficiencies and other means. In addition, private funds are available for water acquisition by private, non-profit organizations. To ensure efficient and effective use of water acquisition investments, there is a need for those involved in water rights acquisition to coordinate acquisition activities, cost-share acquisitions, track expenditures and amount of water put into trust, exchange information on valuation techniques, and seek long term funding opportunities.

## **I. Coordination of acquisition activities and funding**

Ecology is working jointly and cooperatively with many entities involved and interested in water rights acquisition. The cooperative work takes many forms, for example:

### **1. Water Irrigation Efficiencies Grant Program**

Local conservation districts are assisting the agricultural community in implementing water conservation measures and irrigation efficiencies in the 16 critical basins. Local districts, the Washington Conservation Commission and Ecology are working cooperatively to ensure a portion of the water saved from the \$7.8 million irrigation efficiencies program will be placed in the state trust water rights program to restore instream flows. Template contracts were developed jointly by Ecology and Washington Conservation Commission. Negotiated contracts will be co-signed by both agencies. Saved water will be put into the trust program and the benefit it provides to fish will be tracked jointly by Ecology and local districts.

### **2. Bonneville Power Administration and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation**

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is implementing its Columbia Basin Water Transaction Program through 10 “qualified local entities” within the four states. In Washington, these qualified local entities are comprised of the Department of Ecology, Walla Walla Watershed Alliance and Washington Water Trust. Together, the three organizations have submitted joint proposals to BPA and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. These collaborative efforts will result in cost-effective water transactions designed to increase tributary flows to protect or enhance fish habitat in eight critical basins.

## **II. Tracking and reporting water rights acquired by all funding sources**

The following information need to be documented for each transaction:

- Where and how much water is being acquired — and for how long.
- How much is being spent on acquisitions and by whom.
- Whether opportunities for future acquisitions exist.
- Price, administrative costs and time to complete acquisitions.

- Willingness and acceptance of the water-right holders and the local community.
- Cost-sharing and future funding opportunities.

All trust water rights will be tracked in the future using Ecology's water rights tracking database. Pending the completion of the system water rights acquired by Ecology will be tracked as displayed in **Appendix IV**. Efforts are underway to track all transactions, particularly when public funds are used to acquire water rights.